



## **Religion and Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Critical Assessment of Land Dispute Resolution in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examined the impact of religion on alternative dispute resolution such as negotiation, meditation and conciliation on land conflict between Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara, Ikwo. The broad objective of the paper is to examine the impact of religion on the Land Dispute Resolution between Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara, Ikwo. The paper adopted survey and documentary methods in gathering data. The descriptive analytical technique tools such as tables, simple percentages, histograms, charts and content analysis data were used for data analysis. The theoretical framework used is human needs theory. The paper revealed that there is incompatibility of religious fanatics between traditional religion practice of the area and Christians belief which hinders the efforts to resolve the land dispute. The paper recommended setting up a special committee to harmonize the relationship between the two major religions as gateway to peace building in the area. There is also need to legislate at local level and specify various punishments for offenders of religious bigotry to encourage peace and harmony in the area.

**Keywords:** Religion; land dispute; Negotiation; Meditation and Conciliation.

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## Introduction

Land conflict is a major critical issue globally. The worst hit is in the developing countries where religion and other factors such as poverty, unemployment, corruption etc. play a great role before one can access land facilities. The traditions, customs, norms and peoples cultural belief in a particular area determine the way land is owned and managed. The peace building process of alternative dispute resolution methods differ in various communities. Land dispute is as old as society; it is very common and poses a big threat to human security in the world (Nwoba, 2018). Iroegbu (2015) alludes to this fact that dispute is part of human and community lives and relationships. United Nation IFTPA (2008) collaborated to this assertion that land is not only an important economic asset but an essential source of livelihood which is linked to community, history, identity, values and culture.

United Nation IFTPA (2008) believes that land and dispute are often inextricably linked and where there is dispute, land and natural resources are often the major contributing sources of incompatibility. The numerous proceeds accruing from land motivate members of different communities to mobilize their subjects on land issues. This attitude made land a central object of dispute. The competition arising from members of the communities on land issue which is on increase with population explosion resulted to exchange of words between individuals and groups. This action metamorphosis to many confrontations among members of the communities (United Nation IFTPA, 2008). Religion plays various roles in different communities. Religion is a source of violence or reconciliation of disputes in various communities. The members of a community use their religion to trigger, avert, or mitigate dispute in an area. The social adaptability shows that institutions such as families, kindreds, villages and traditional institutions are prepared to deal with challenges and changes brought about by land resource scarcity. The negative social consequences associated with land have capability of raising dust on land ownership. The struggle for land resources fuel armed disputes in Africa (Anana, 2006). The proliferation, acquisition of small arms and light weapons in many communities have roots on fighting to secure, own and use disputed land. Nwoba, (2018: p.1), notes that, “disputes continue to breed incompatibilities, dis-unities and widen the ugly gap of socio-economic, political and religious relationships in an area”.



In an efforts to maintain peaceful co-existence and resolve the incompatibilities and dam the consequences of escalating further confrontations and aggressiveness of the people, thus, the need for the peace building process in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara, Ikwo . To achieve a permanent peace and resolve the broken relationship between the two communities, alternative method of dispute resolution such as negotiation, meditation, and conciliation on land dispute were applied in the area. Sincerely speaking, even before the colonial rule, Ikwo people, Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara inclusive, resolve their disputes through the following structures in the area; family heads, kindred heads, “*ekwuf*” heads, village heads, chiefs, chief priests, “*ozo*” title holders, “*ogbuanya*” title holders, elders judicial council and use of masquerades by adopting mediation in their various playgrounds or use deities, oracles/shrines in the forests or homes to make peace and reconcile broken relationships etc. (Nwoba, 2018).

The mediation process of dispute resolution in Ikwo in concrete situations mainly apply oath taking which uses deities, oracles, shrines and fetish rituals/sacrifices of materials items such as goat, fowl, kola, wine, dry meat and palm leaves etc. as a panacea for peace building mechanisms in the area. The application of oath taking as an indigenous religious way of resolving disputes contradicts the faith of some Christian believers thus, the controversy the paper investigated as it relates Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara. The paper is divided into six sub-headings to achieve the set objectives. These include; introduction, conceptual and theoretical clarifications, theoretical framework, methodology, data presentation and analysis, and conclusion/recommendations.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications**

### **Religion**

Religion is not static and has no universal accepted definition because of complexities arising from various scholars perspectives (Igwe, 2004). Alluding to this assertion of complexity, religion erudite scholars see it as follows; Woodhead (2004), Tipton (1982) Needham (1972), and Sullivan (2005) etc. note that religion is a belief, in this context, religion means believing on the existence of supernatural, accepting certain unique doctrines, set of propositions and a test of orthodoxy. They maintain that believing in supernatural beings and its propositions are key to religion. To some others such as Geertz, Banton, (ed) (1971), Fred-Mensah, (2005), Friedman

(1986), Dawkins and Asad (1993) etc. religion is a cultural order of the people. To this group, culture is the yardstick to measure religion.

Parsons (1935), Herbert (2003) Hoover, (2006) Brubaker, and Cooper, (2000) argue that religion is a discourse, but to Brown (2000, 2006), Asad (1993) etc. see religion as an ideology and mystification, while Brubaker and Cooper (2000) maintains that religion is an identity etc. Kelsey (2004), “defines religion as a system of thought shared by a group that provides its members with an object of devotion and a code of behaviour by which they can ethically judge their actions”. Kelsey insists that religion uses set of values to define people’s way of life and choices.

Summarily, scholars on the efforts to understand the concept of religion point at similar issues, these include; belief, culture, discourse, ideology and mystification and thought shared by a group, hence, religion is identity conscious, it identifies with supernatural being as well as code of behaviour. The long period of practices of norms, custom, tradition and share of values orientations guide the code of behaviour of the people in particular place. However, religion is the lens where people learn, know and belief on the doctrine of good and evil; deity and spirit, god and Satan to sustain and maintain an expected code of behavior for peaceful co-existence and security of the people.

### **Land Dispute**

Land dispute is the major area of emphasis in this paper; therefore, it became imperative to make necessary clarification on the concept and structure. Dale et al (1999), on the meaning of land, posit that it is the surface of the earth with materials above and beneath it such as air, water, houses and natural resources etc. Put differently, World Bank (2007) posits that land is ally to natural resource disputes which are between individuals or groups competing for the control or use of natural resources in particular piece of land. Natural resources are materials that occur in nature which is useful to human beings such as; water, air, land, forests, fish, wildlife, top soil and minerals. The dispute between individuals or groups results in legal challenges and civil disputes.

The natural resource scarcity fuel land disputes between individuals or groups (Green, 2005). Dispute scholars agree that factors such as; demographic change on population growth, urbanization, economic development on productivity of financial and industrial markets, social



inequality, inequitable distribution of resources, social classes wealth and ethnic groups cause an upsurge of inter-communal dispute in various communities (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

UN IFTPA (2008) explains natural resources to include the actual or potential sources of wealth that occur in a natural state such as timber, water, fertile land, wildlife, minerals, metals, stones and hydrocarbons. The dispute between individuals or groups results in legal challenges and civil disputes. The natural resource scarcity fuel land disputes between individuals or groups (Green, 2005).

### **Dispute**

Falade (2011) defines dispute as a context between people with opposing ideas, beliefs, values, needs and goals. The knowledge available for people to fully understand land dispute is limited. The people in society lack the knowledge why some land disputes persist, despite resolution mechanisms available to resolve these numerous disputes. It is difficult to understand why some land disputes develop to violence and resist resolution mechanisms available to resolve them. It is notable that there are some land disputes that are resolved within a short period while others last for a long time. There are some that are intractable, defying available resolution mechanisms.

The scholars of land dispute such as Façade (2011), Dale et al (1999), (Homer-Dixon, 1999) Green, 2005) etc. were of the opinion that values of land economically and otherwise to livelihood causes resistance that meta-morphosis to unending disputes that led to numerous loses. The inequality of natural resources is the reason for conscious discrimination and deprivation from groups. They failed to recognize that dispute occurs as a result of a state political or economic interest in various communities.

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Tradition is a well-developed procedure on some specific conditions, experiences on indigenous population of community in a particular location and within the society context. The nature of Nigeria's diversity is as a result of different historical inclinations, evolutions and experiences. This structure denies one particular alternative dispute resolution to be dominant or possess national coloration in terms of its applicability. The dispute resolutions are basically structured customarily and politically. These dispute resolution mechanisms include; negotiation, meditation, conciliation, and arbitration, approaches such as oath-taking, covenant, dialogue, demarcation, sanction, banishment, historic approach and deity consultant etc. are applied.



In his contribution, Zartman, (2000, p. 25) states that, “some of the alternative dispute resolutions are those methods practiced for an extended period and have evolved within Nigerian societies rather than being the product of external transplantation, while some of the resolution which uses English system make use of litigations to secure human rights”. Braimah (1999) sees dispute resolution that is traditional as indigenous, endogenous, native, local, cultural, Nigerian and African. He as well views tradition as a very long established values and accepted customs. The methods or procedures are unique practices for long period of time which becomes immemorial in usage in any particular community.

Fred (2005:1) states that, “capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together is by effectively settling and facilitating the terms of their relationship” the totality of doing everything is critically based on sustaining and facilitating collective common actions for achieving mutually beneficial ends for selfish or parochial interest. For example, the discriminatory or hate speeches such as; I am Hausa, Fulani, Igbo or Yoruba man. The notion beyond the country is I am a Nigerian Man or African Man etc. (Golwa, 2013). Therefore, alternative dispute resolution is culturally oriented and tools of building peace in Africa.

### **Negotiation**

Negotiation is one of the type of Alternative Dispute Resolution methods and most commonly used. Scholar such as Chong & Zin (2012) argue that negotiation is the most commonly used Alternative Dispute Resolution method for resolving disputes. They affirm that the method is informal and used as a preventive measure to avoid completely fledged disputes between incompatible parties. Adding his voice in this direction Wang (2000) insists that the simplest way of settling disputes is by means of negotiation. He as well argues that negotiation creates opportunity for parties concerned to know the strengths and weaknesses of their own cases themselves (Chong & Zin, 2012).

Fisher, Ury and Patton (1991, p.6), define negotiation as “a basic means of getting what you want from others”. This assertion is supported by Ramsden (2009, p.2), who says “it is a process whereby parties attempt to reach a settlement without involving an independent third party”. The important virtue of negotiation in Alternative Dispute Resolution made it a key to other types of Alternative Dispute Resolution. It is found in other Alternative Dispute Resolution such as mediation and conciliation being a technique general used for reaching an understanding which



is mutually acceptable for the parties involved. Therefore, mediation and conciliation involved the tool of negotiation. It refers to the process where one of the parties sits down with the other party in a dispute to discuss and agree with the outcomes. It also means to bargain and confer to the main purpose of mutual agreement. Zăpârțan (2007) buttresses further that negotiation as a tool for dispute settlement is used to designate a way of achieving good relationship.

He further asserts that through the means of discussions, and exchange of opinions, ideas, and values, settlement of dispute is achieved as opposed to conflict and violence in the process. Thuderoz (2002, p.12), concludes that negotiation has “natural biological roots in the relations between subjects, because it is a way by which persons manage disputes and search, by means of dialogue, solutions which express a mutual agreement”. Goldberg, Sander, and Rogers (1992, p.6) align to this assertion when they define negotiation as:” communication for the purpose of persuasion. Negotiation is a process in which parties to a dispute discuss possible outcomes directly with each other. Parties exchange proposals and demands, make arguments, and continue the discussion until a solution is reached, or an impasse declared”.

### **Mediation**

There is no universal accepted definition of mediation; it varies according to author’s socio-cultural background and field of study. Mediation is as old as the society. Goldberg, et al (1992, p.6), define “mediation as an assisted and facilitated negotiation carried out by a third party”. Chong et al (2012, p. 430), define, “mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) method in which a neutral third party, known as the mediator, seeks to resolve a dispute between the parties in conflict”. Brown et al (1993, p. 291), note that, “it is used in other sectors of the economy which include: commercial, family, interpersonal, civil, labour, community, complex public disputes, environmental cases and other disputes in the society”. The definitions above are pointing at one crucial issue about mediation, that is, third party. The issue of third party differentiates mediation from negotiation, the parties concerned is in agreement and willing to assist in reaching a settlement of the dispute. The mediator or mediators when agreement is finally reached provide the parties with an evidence of written agreement that is legally binding after endorsing it by parties concerned (Ramsden, 2009). Chong et al (2012), are of the opinion that for mediation to succeed, it depends largely on fairness with the cooperation of the parties during the mediation process. Therefore, mediation is a process of using a neutral person called



third party to resolve a dispute without settling the dispute in the court. It is an alternative to the litigation in the court. The third person used in the resolution of the dispute is called the mediator. Dispute scholars regard mediation as the best method of dispute resolution. The process of mediation involves the mediator otherwise known as the facilitator. The facilitator is not empowered by the position as the third party to assign blame or impose any type of solution to parties involved. The primary responsibility is to assist in settling dispute of the parties amicably. The outcome of the result of the settlement is theirs which make them happier (Davis, 1994). The method worked both domestically in Nigeria and globally. The workability of mediation as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms depends on the preparation of the facts and issues on the current information involved in the concerned matter. The parties may seek for the assistance of lawyer for the preparation of the proposed facts and issues, if the person deemed it necessary.

### **Features of Mediation**

- Promotes communication and cooperation
- Provides a basis for you to resolve disputes on your own
- Voluntary, informal and flexible
- Private and confidential, avoiding public disclosure of personal or business problems
- Can reduce hostility and preserve ongoing relationships
- Allows you to avoid the uncertainty, time, cost and stress of going to trial
- Allows you to make mutually acceptable agreements tailored to meet your needs
- Can result in a win-win solution

### **Conciliation**

Stewart (2006) describes conciliation as a process that is mainly voluntarily entered into by the disputing parties. However, conciliation involves an impartial third party. Loots (1991, p.1012), argues that conciliation is “a settlement out of court, usually by the assistance of a neutral third party”, he as well notes that conciliation approach is flexible and outcome of dispute is entirely dependent on the willingness and acceptance of the concerned parties to take part in the resolution process. Rao (2009,p. 320), affirms that, “these methods are often more effective in resolving disputes than litigation, because the outcome of disputes is interest based for both parties rather than rights based and the process of conciliation is not as prolonged and costly as the process of litigation”.





Conciliation has similarity with mediation though not exactly the same, as it is a process that involves the third party, known as a conciliator. The responsibility of the conciliator is to settle by restoring damaged relationships. He/she restores the disputing parties by bringing them together. The conciliator can apportion blame and make further clarifications, perceptions and unveil misperceptions. The neutrality needed for mediation approach does not apply in conciliation as the conciliator may not have total absence of interests of the concerned parties. The process reduces inflammatory rhetoric, tension and opens channels or window of communication and at the same time facilitates continued negotiations. The incompatibility between the parties is restored to a pre dispute formal status quo. After this stages other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms may then, be applied for the parties. It is applied when parties involved are unwilling to come to the bargaining peace table (Oluwabiyi, 2015).

### **Relevance of Religion to African Society**

The followings are the relevance of religion to peace co-existence in the society

1. Religion is a source of understanding uncertainties confronting human race. It also gives direction and prepares the members of the society to face realities politically, economically, culturally, emotionally and intellectually.
2. Religion addresses issues of mysteries and go beyond the advanced science and technology to provide answers to life after death, pains and suffering, supernatural existences backed with philosophical orientations according to belief and value system in society.
3. It builds a solid foundation to regulate code of expected behaviour and preaches tolerance and harmonious existence among the people. It is a window people know their right and left, right and wrong, good and evil. It lays a platform for peaceful co-existence and security of the people as it is a gateway for love, kindness, faithfulness and resolving and reconciling disputes.
4. It is a source of interaction with supernatural being, hope for the hopeless. The opium of the masses. Religion is channel of secret revelations of the spiritual occurrences and manifestations, it explains the needs for the human race to run for their salvation of mankind.
5. On the level of communication, religion plays dual functions; daily worships strengthen the members' relationship as a means of social cohesion, in the other hand, vertical



communication open door for interaction with the Creator and with the intended psychological satisfactions.

6. African religion deals with deities, oracles, shrines as well as various modes of worship and performs rituals and sacrifices for the well-beings of the people. Religion also makes people to rejoice in their mode of happiness such as birthday, marriage, awards, festivals etc. and uncertainties like; sorrow and death, believing on the supremacy and will of Almighty God for better tomorrow.

7. Religion preaches that God is omnipotent and omniscience, He knows our needs at any particular time. God created the universe, and urge people to have faith as well as depend on him for survival on earth.

8. Religion reconciles and manages disputes in various villages or communities.

Collaborating with these views of religious relevancies, Azebre (2012) opines that indigenous mechanisms of resolving disputes are still important to the people. He affirms that alternative dispute resolution must be in accordance with the cultural value system of various communities. The alternative dispute resolution provides an opportunity for people of the community to interact with the disputed parties for reconciliation. The process of resolving disputes using alternative dispute resolution presided over by the elders as well village stakeholders promotes social harmony and encouraged viable concrete consensus building, social bridge reconstruction and enactment of law and order in the society. In the conclusion, he noted that the western world placed more emphasis on the English judicial system that is not African oriented, thus escalating more disputes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is Human needs theory. The proponents of this theory are Abraham Maslow, John Burton, Marshal Rosenberg and Manfred Max-Neef. Coate and Rosati (1988, p.46) notes that:

human needs are a powerful source of explanation of human behaviour and social interaction...The theory posits that the basic cause of intractable dispute is the underlying need of people to meet their needs on individual, group and societal bases. According to this theory, human beings need certain essentials, if they must live and attain well-being in any ramification of life. Such essentials are known as (basic) human needs. The argument of human needs theorists, therefore, is that the unavailability of alternative means to meet the needs of individuals or groups is what triggers violence – or conflict. Other times, violence also occurs when humans require understanding, respect and consideration for their needs. These needs are not only subsistence ones such



as food, water and shelter but also other biological needs such as participation, identity, understanding and recognition, security, safety, belonging (love), self-esteem and personal fulfilment life satisfaction.

In the application of this theory, the religious identity is not recognised rather violated on the process of peace building with alternative dispute resolution in the area. The dispute resolution approaches are fetish and incompatible with religious belief of Christianity. Thus, ensues lack of confidence among the Christians and create room for re-occurrence of dispute as some members of the community are aggrieved as the resolution process not only ignore their religious faith but lure them to worshipping idols, shrines and deities through traditional rituals in the oath taking process. The process destroys their self-esteem and personal fulfilment of life satisfaction and covenant with God which crate room for religious bigotry or fanatics in the area.

Anyacho, et al (2010) further argue that Christianity changes the attitude and perception of people on traditional belief based on social change and indict social change of westerners of inability to adequately address the increase of crimes and disputes emerging in the contemporary society. Egberi, et al., (2015) in similar view believe that alternative dispute resolution based on peace building mechanisms and principles known to the people captures their way of life, Morena and Kwaku (2010) succinctly argues further that acceptance of indigenous alternative dispute resolution knowledge, experience, custom yield positive results than impose mechanisms that are alien to the people.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted mixed methods of both quantitative and qualitative methods in carrying out its investigation. In qualitative method data employed for the study were gathered from secondary sources such as public and private libraries, internet materials notably relevant articles were also carefully gathered. However, content analysis and narrative analytical techniques involving data reduction were utilized for the analysis of data. In addition, information sequence employed for analysis of data were extracted carefully from numerous logical chains of evidence available in periodic papers, magazines, journal papers, conference papers, documentary materials such as peace committee reports, security reports, committee meetings, edited book and so on.

On quantitative analysis of numerical values statistically, the study employed descriptive statistics, simple percentage, frequency tables, histogram used for the test of hypothesis and used cross-sectional survey design because of endogenous and exogenous variables to be measured



which requires the respondents that have cognate experiences and relevant information concerning the variables under study. The justification is that the sample sizes are scattered among other groups in different locations outside the study area. Primary sources employed include; questionnaire instrument and observation.

The population of Ikwo is 214,604 people (NPC, 2006). Probability sampling techniques was applied. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques were also used. Ikwo local government was grouped in line with the existing five strata; Unweka, Alike, Mgbabu, Echara, and Okpintumo in accordance with the five principal communities in the area. Ikwo is one of the 13 local governments in Ebonyi State. The global proportional formula was used to determine the actual population of the Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara, from Ikwo. While 2.8% global standard was used to estimate the population to the current time.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

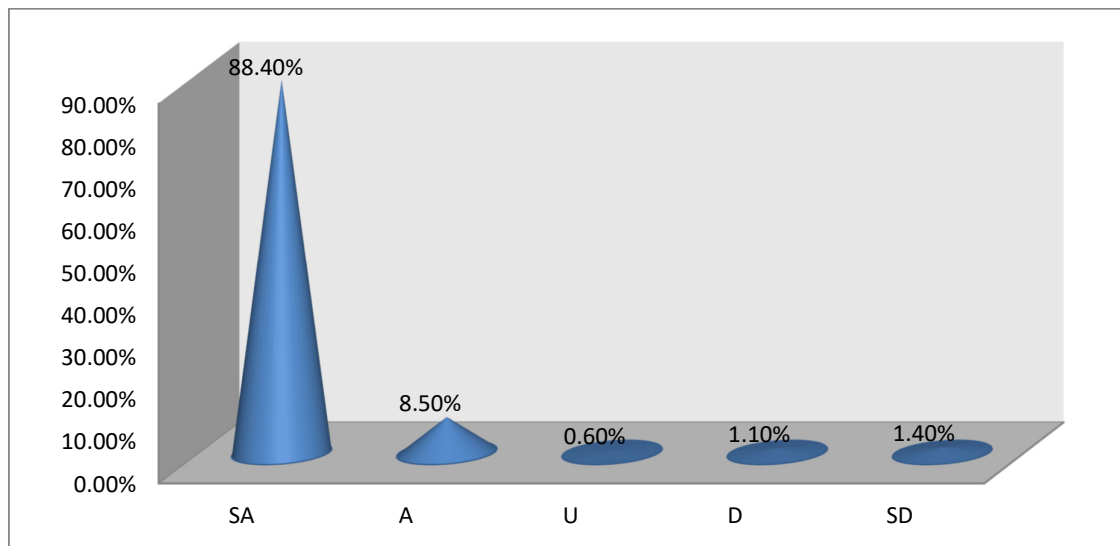


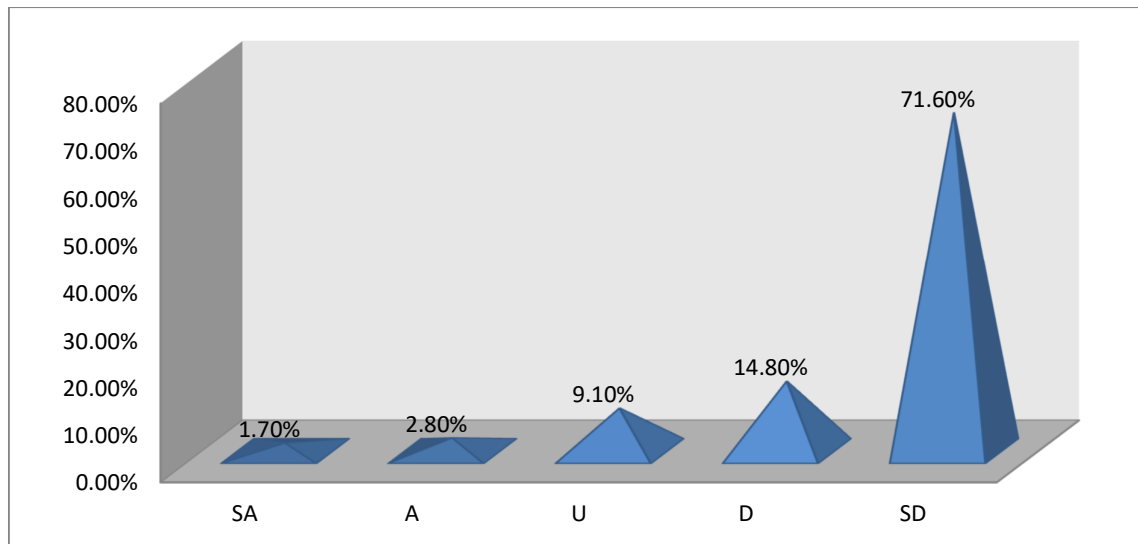
Figure 1: Responses of Respondents on whether some of the Members of the Communities died for defiling the process of resolving the dispute.

Source: Nwoba & Otu's Field Survey, 2023

The result of responses of the respondents as presented in figure 1 shows that greatest percentage (88.4%) of them strongly agreed, 8.5% of them indicated agreed while 0.6% of them were undecided, 1.1% disagreed and 1.4% of them strongly disagreed on the figure 1. Going by these responses, it was deduces that greater proportion of the sampled respondents agreed with 96.9%,



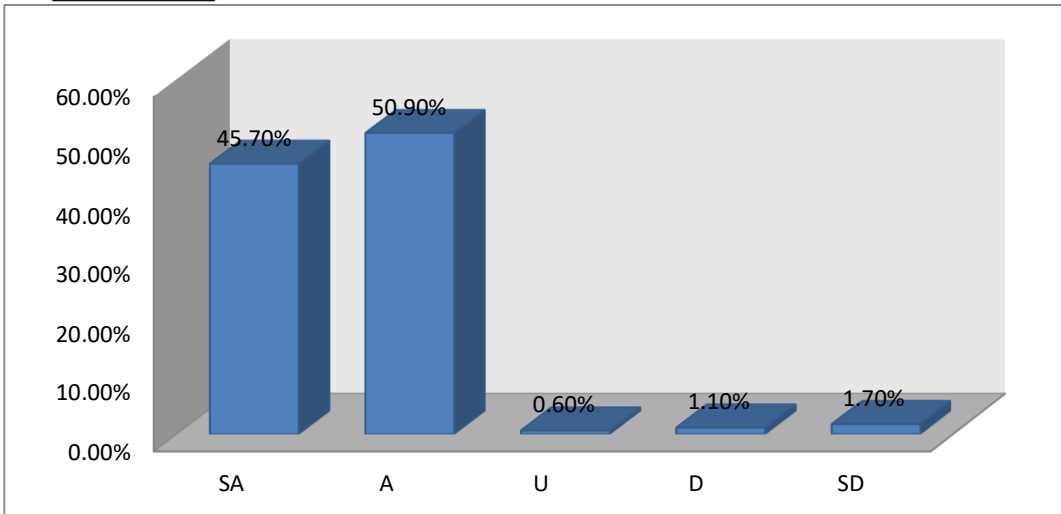
others disagreed by 2.5% with 0.6% undecided that some of the members of the communities died for defiling the process of resolving land dispute of Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area. The result indicates that some members of the communities died for defiling the process of resolving land dispute in the area.



Source: Nwoba's & Otu Field Survey, 2023

Figure 2: Responses of Respondents on whether the Elders do slightly alter their invoking words to avert the Wrath of the Covenant/Oath Taking Curse.

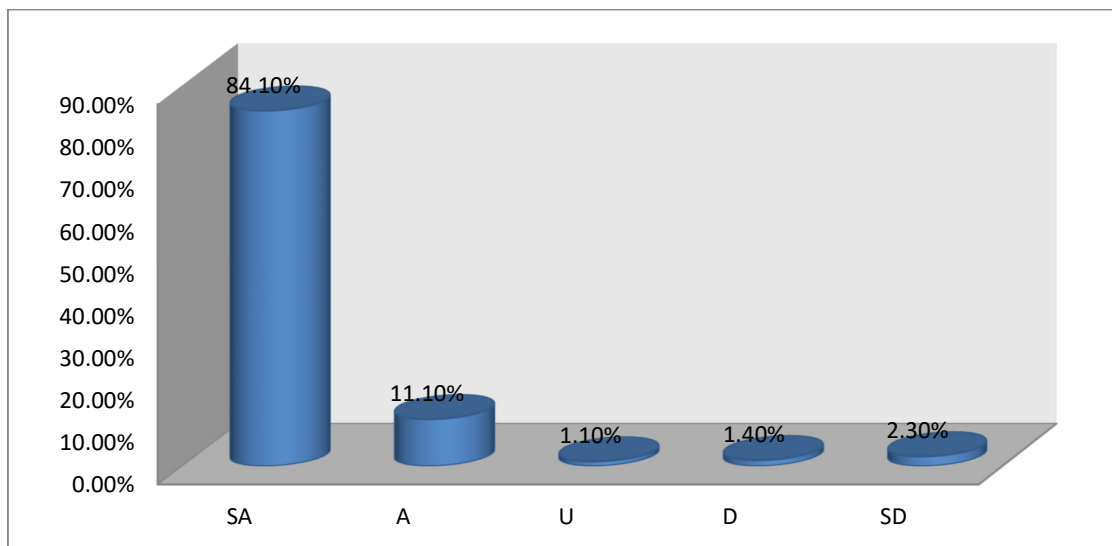
The result in figure 2 shows the ratings of the sampled respondents on questionnaire figure 2. The responses as indicated by the respondents are as follows: 1.7% strongly agreed, 2.8% agreed, 9.1% undecided, 14.8% disagreed and 71.6% strongly disagreed. This indicates that majority of the sampled respondents of 86.4% disagreed and agreed 4.5%, undecided 9.1% that whether the elders do slightly alter their invoking words to avert the wrath of the covenant/oath taking curse in resolving land dispute in the area. The result shows that the elders do not slightly alter their invoking words to avert the wrath of the covenant/oath taking curse in resolving Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area.



Source: Nwoba & Otu's Field Survey, 2023

Figure 3: Responses of Respondents on whether Christians have mixed feelings in accepting the Verdict of Oath taking.

The result in figure 3 shows that 45.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 50.9% of them agreed, 0.6% undecided, 1.1% of them disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed on questionnaire item fifteen. This indicates that Christians have mixed feelings in accepting the verdict of oath taking in resolving land disputes in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area.

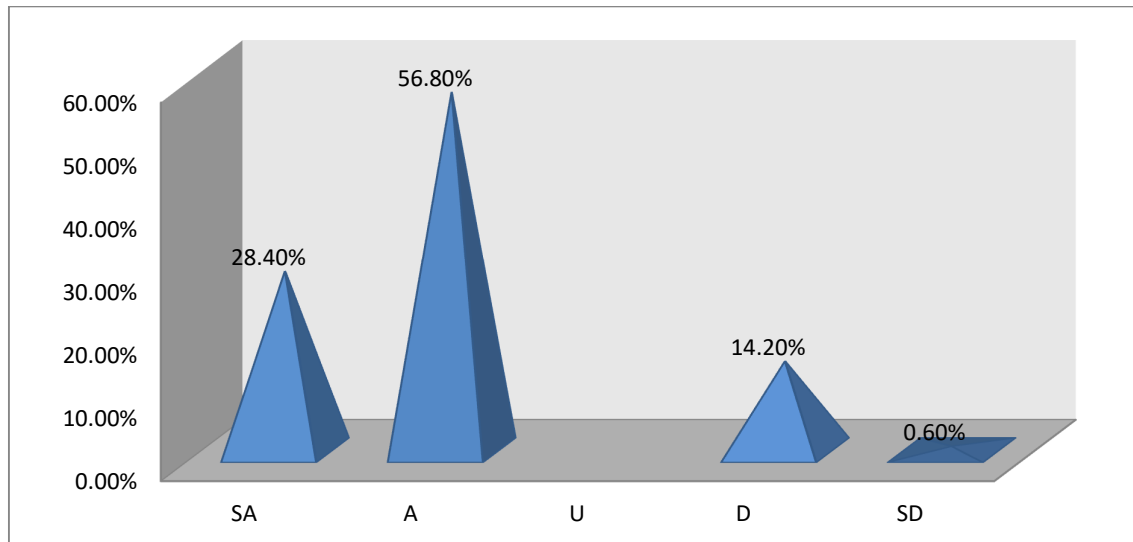


Source: Nwoba & Otu's Field Survey, 2023.



Figure 4: Responses of Respondents on whether the Christians reject the Verdict from the result of Oracles/Deities consulted during the resolution process.

Figure 4 shows the opinion of the sampled respondents on questionnaire figure 4. The responses are as follows: strongly agreed 84.1%, agreed 11.1%, undecided 1.1%, disagreed 1.4% and strongly disagreed 2.3%. This means that vast proportion of the sampled respondents strongly agreed that Christians rejected verdict from the result of oracles/deities consultations during the settlement of land dispute in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area.



Source: Nwoba & Otu's Field Survey, 2022.

Figure 5: Responses of Respondents on whether the Christians do not participate on administering/taking covenant during resolution process.

In Figure 5 Responses of the respondents on whether the Christians do not participate on administering/taking covenant during resolution of land disputes in the area. The analysis in figure 5 shows that 28.4% of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 56.8% of them agreed, 14.2% of them disagreed and 0.6% undecided. The responses indicate that the respondents disagreed on questionnaire figure 5 that Christians do not participate on administering/taking covenant during resolution of land disputes in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area.

## Analysis

The respondents response on the use of alternative dispute resolution show that Christians have mix feelings in accepting the verdict and therefore, rejected the verdict of oath taking in resolving land disputes in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute in Ikwo local government area. It also shows that Christians do not participate on administering/taking traditional covenant during resolution of land disputes. This is in line with the theoretical perspective of the paper of human needs theory that human beings require understanding, respect and consideration for their needs. These needs are not only subsistence ones such as food, water and shelter but also other important biological needs like participation, identity, understanding and recognition. Reasoning in this direction, Anyacho, et al (2010) further argue that Christianity changes the attitude and perception of people on traditional belief based on social change and indict social change of westerners of inability to adequately address the increase of crimes and disputes emerging in the contemporary society.

The result of the investigation further indicates that some members of the communities such local actors, saboteurs, elders, members of peace committee, people involved in bribery etc died for defiling the process of resolving the land dispute. The respondents equivocally unveil that elders do not slightly alter their invoking words to avert the wrath of the covenant/oath taking curse in resolving Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara land dispute. The responses of the respondents further show clearly that alternative dispute resolution is very strong mechanism and still stands the test of time as the people of the area still cherished it, as a peace building approach to resolve land disputes.

The peoples believe is that, it builds a solid foundation to regulate code of expected behaviour in the area. It is a cultural platform for village resilience which preaches tolerance and harmonious living on the altar of co-existence among the people. The people of Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka/Omege-Echara believe that alternative dispute resolution is the window people know their rights and left, right and wrong, good and evil. It lays a platform for peaceful co-existence and security of the people as it a gateway for love, kindness and faithfulness in resolving disputes. It is on this backdrop of disagreement of the outcome of the verdict of oath-taking as a result of faith coupled with other cultural manipulations that are community interest based made religion to fail to resolve the land disputes in the area.

## **Findings**





1. The paper reveals that there is incompatibility between traditional religion practice of the area and Christian belief which hindered the efforts to resolve the land dispute in the area.
2. The method of traditional oath taking and that of Christian religion differs which is always the point of contestation among the peace committees/members of the communities ignite further disagreement and unending land dispute in the area.

### **Conclusion**

Land dispute is a major critical issue globally. The worst hit is the developing countries where religion and other factors such as poverty, unemployment, corruption etc. play a great role to drive accessibility of land facilities for accumulation of wealth. The traditions, customs, norms and peoples cultural belief in a particular area determine the way land is owned and managed. The alternative dispute resolution also differs in various communities.

In the area under study, incompatibility in the different belief of both peace committee and members of the communities varies. The traditional worshipers and Christians are two parallel lines that are difficult to meet in cases of land dispute resolution in the area. The responses of the respondents indict both peace committee and members of the communities of their disparities in accepting a particular method to resolve land conflict thus, the unending land conflict in the area under study.

### **Recommendations**

1. The paper recommends setting up a special committee to harmonise the relationship between the two major religions (Traditional and Church). It shall be a gateway to peace building and break the inherent of fanaticism of belief and methods of oath taking that are incompatible in the area.
2. There is also the need to legislate at local level and specify various punishments for offenders of religious bigotry to encourage peace and harmony in the area.
3. The alternative dispute resolution should be reformed to embrace new religion and modernity as well document the previous verdicts for future references.

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